

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE
RALEIGH, N.C.

Environmental Enhancement Grant Program

Request for Proposals – Issued July 8, 2019

INTEREST MEETING	Thursday, July 25, 2019 at 10am
LETTERS OF INTENT DUE:	Monday, August 19, 2019
INFORMATION MEETINGS:	Wednesday, September 11, 2019 at 10am
<u>PROPOSALS DUE:</u>	<u>11:00AM, Tuesday, September 24, 2019</u>

I. INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Office of the North Carolina Attorney General has issued this Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify environmental enhancement projects contemplated by the Smithfield Agreement for reimbursement under the Environmental Enhancement Grant Program ("EEG Program")

In 2000, the Attorney General and Smithfield Foods entered into a 25-year Agreement that, in part, provided \$2 million per year for environmental projects across the state. This money was used to establish the EEG Program that has awarded environmental grants since 2002. The goal of the EEG Program is preserve and enhance North Carolina's natural resources with an emphasis on projects that are related to the swine industry or that are located in eastern North Carolina. .

In the over 15 years since the Agreement was signed, nearly \$24 million dollars in grant funds have been spent to improve North Carolina's environment. EEG funds have been used for projects such as wetland restoration, land acquisition, storm-water remediation, stream stabilization, and buffer installations, among many others. EEG funds have been used to conserve over 23,000 acres, close 240 hog lagoons, and over one-fourth of the projects improved or added to public lands.

Please review each section carefully. This RFP explains the application process, including funding criteria, eligibility of participants, evaluation criteria, and deadlines. The Request also outlines some of the performance guidelines for grant recipients. The RFP is solely a request for expressions of interest and statements of qualification. It is not an invitation for tenders, an offer to contract or an invitation capable of acceptance to create a contract. The Attorney General may cancel this RFP at any time without liability for any loss, damage, cost, or expense incurred or suffered by any applicant as a result of that cancellation.

OBJECTIVES

The EEG Program offers reimbursement grants for projects that meet the goals of the Smithfield Agreement, including obtaining environmental easements, constructing or maintaining wetlands, restoring and protecting of impaired, degraded, or endangered surface waters, as well as conserving and protecting of targeted natural areas. When applying for a grant, please consider the purpose of the EEG Program, the program areas identified and their objectives, and the budget limitations for the project.

MINIMUM APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

The applicant must be a nonprofit organization or institution with documented 501(c) (3) status, whose primary purpose is the conservation, preservation, or restoration of North Carolina's environmental and natural resources. In addition, federal, state, and local governments are eligible to submit applications.

PROJECT ACTIVITY DURATION AND FUNDING

The EEG Program awards up to \$500,000.00 for projects that will be completed within three (3) years from the date of the grant award. Grant funds are provided on a reimbursement basis for

project costs incurred after the execution of a memorandum of understanding (MOU). A minimum of 10% of the total award will be held until the project is completed and the final report has been approved by the EEG Program. Funds can be made available for real property acquisitions that require grant funds to close as long as all documentation has been submitted and all requirements are met.

The EEG Program encourages applicants to seek additional funding sources and partners for proposed projects. Favorable consideration will be given to proposals that include in the project's proposed budget sources of funding other than this program. Applicants must be in good financial standing and must demonstrate superior organizational capabilities to be selected for a grant.

Routine operating and administrative expenses, salaries, and benefits for staff are not eligible for reimbursement. Project-related professional services are eligible for reimbursement if reasonably accounted for on an hourly basis.

DEADLINES FOR SUBMISSION OF MATERIALS

Letters of Intent

Prior to submitting a proposal, each applicant must submit a letter of intent electronically to EEG@ncdoj.gov. Letters of intent are due **Monday, August 19, 2019**.

Proposals

All proposal materials must be submitted electronically to EEG@ncdoj.gov on or before **11:00 AM Tuesday, September 24, 2019**. Late materials cannot be considered.

PROGRAM CONTACT

Applicants should direct all questions regarding this RFP or the EEG Program to:

Sarah G. Zambon
Assistant Attorney General
(919) 716-6600
EEG@ncdoj.gov

II. EEG PROGRAM AREAS

The EEG Program funds a wide variety of projects. In order to better compare similar types of proposals, applicants should identify their projects within the following categories 1) land acquisitions including conservation easements; 2) data collection, research, planning or education; and 3) construction, remediation or restoration work. Applicants are asked to identify their proposed projects as based on the proposed project's primary activities. If the project include multiple types of work, the identification of the proposed project should be based on which of the primary activities will require the most time or money.

LAND ACQUISITIONS AND CONSERVATION EASEMENTS

Long-term benefits to the environment of North Carolina can be achieved through concerted efforts to protect environmentally significant areas. The Smithfield Agreement identifies conservation easements as an effective method for improving the environment and providing long-term protection of North Carolina's natural resources.

Past Grant Award Examples:

- Obtained over 900 acres along Salmon Creek and Albemarle Sound with significant ecological and archaeological importance which were transferred to the State to create the Salmon Creek State Natural Area
- Acquired a 1,789.64 acre tract near Black River, which was home to a bald cypress tree that was determined to be over 2,613 years old
- Permanently protected 1,896 acres in Western North Carolina including more than twenty miles of stream and river frontage
- Acquired 2,991.58 acres along the Waccamaw River that was transferred, in part, to the State as public game lands as well as retaining a portion of the land for a nature preserve

RESEARCH, PLANNING AND EDUCATION

Research, planning, and education are crucial to identifying challenges facing North Carolina's environment and creating solutions to address those challenges. EEG funds allow researchers to identify and investigate environmental changes, inform organizations on where future environmental efforts should be focused, and deepen the public's interest in their role in protecting North Carolina's natural resources.

Past Grant Award Examples:

- Identified community college campuses for future implementation of stormwater best management practices
- Monitored water quality along the middle and upper Tar River basin for over 3 years
- Developed an online teacher training course about protecting water resources
- Analyzed chemical changes to precipitation to determine how to restore ground and surface waters

CONSTRUCTION, REMEDIATION, AND RESTORATION

The EEG Programs supports remediation to improve impaired waters and address problems for communities affected by adverse water quality. Grants from the EEG program fund the construction and maintenance of wetlands and the stream restorations. Awards can also be given for the construction and installation of stormwater best management practices.

Past Grant Award Examples:

- Installed field borders to improve water quality and restore wildlife habitats
- Closed over 240 inactive hog lagoons

- Restored 71 acres of wetland habitat on agricultural lands and improved water quality on hundreds of acres by reducing nutrient and sediment runoff removal and increasing flood retention on adjacent parcels
- Stabilized part of the shoreline in Holden Beach on the intercoastal waterway and installation of an oyster reef near Manteo

III. APPLICATION PROCESS

Organizations submitting proposals in response to this RFP should include a completed application form, written responses to the four content sections, and all relevant attachments, in order to qualify for consideration. Applicants must adhere to the page limit and format guidelines. Applicants may submit more than one proposal.

LETTER OF INTENT

Applicants must submit a letter of intent (LOI) by the date listed at the beginning of this RFP. The letter, no more than one page in length, should be submitted electronically and include the following items:

1. Contact information for applicant, including a contact person, email, phone, mailing address
2. Brief statement of eligibility (501(c) (3) environmental organization, government entity, etc.);
3. Description of the proposed project;
4. Project location (county);
5. Specific EEG program type;
6. Anticipated amount for the requested grant; and
7. Other anticipated funding sources.

The Attorney General's Office may contact applicants to discuss their LOI; however, the contents of the letter of intent are not binding on the applicant. **Applicants who fail to submit a Letter of Intent on or before Monday, August 19, 2019 will be ineligible to submit a grant proposal.**

GRANT APPLICATION FORM

The EEG Program will provide all applicants who submit a Letter of Intent on or before the deadline with a grant application form. Applicants must complete and submit the grant application form as part of their application packet.

GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE

EEG proposals for project locations from across the state will be considered; however, consistent with the Smithfield Agreement, priority will be given to projects that directly improve the water quality in the Cape Fear, Lumber, Neuse, Tar-Pamlico, and White Oak River Basins.

PROPOSAL FORMAT

All proposals must comply with the appropriate formatting guidelines. Applications must be submitted electronically and comply with the following format guidelines:

- All proposal documents, including attachments must be in PDF format (except for the proposed budget spreadsheet, see below).
- All attachments must be included as separate documents.
- Proposals can be no longer than 10 pages (exclusive of tables, attachments, or exhibits), with margins of at least 1".
- Proposals must include a table of contents, which does not count against the page limit.
- Typeface must be at least 12-point and easily read.

IV. APPLICATION CONTENTS

PROPOSAL CONTENT

Each proposal must address four content areas:

- (1) Project description and technical specifications;
- (2) Results measurement process;
- (3) Project costs and estimated budget; and,
- (4) Organizational structure and management information.

Applicants should address each of the items below within the proposal but should not feel limited to discuss only the items included in this list or to follow the same organization used below. However, applicants must include a table of contents, which will not count towards the page limit. The percentages listed for each item below is intended to be a recommended estimate of how much space the application should devote to each category.

Project Description and Technical Specifications..... 55%

- Project goals and objectives
- Environmental Benefits from the project
- Description of project activities in detail, including individuals, organizations, or contractors responsible for project completion
- Geographic location of the project, including the county and the area or communities to be served by the proposed project
- How the proposal meets the objectives of the EEG Program
- Identify any monetary or nonmonetary partners or community involvement
- Description of how the proposal addresses North Carolina's current environmental needs

Results Measurement 20%

- Performance measurements to be used
- Individuals or organizations responsible for measuring project results
- Expected outcomes of the project, include benchmarks and milestones
- How the project will be evaluated upon completion

- Whether the project is sustainable or replicable in other parts of North Carolina and how
- Whether the project will be maintained after the grant is completed and if so, how
- Whether there is any additional public benefit to the project such as educational or recreational opportunities

Project Costs and Budget..... 15%

- Amount of funding requested
- Define or describe how the project may be leveraged with other projects or funding
- Prospective budget (Successful applicants are required to submit an itemized budget before grant funds disbursement)

Organizational Structure and Management..... 10%

- Brief history of the organization (250-word maximum)
- Current projects
- Mission statement, goals, and objectives
- Qualifications for the proposed project
- Previous similar projects
- Description of organization's methodology or approach to the proposed project
- Previous experience in applying for, obtaining, and managing grants

REQUIRED ATTACHMENTS

The following materials are required attachments to all proposals. Please include five files (four for government entities) with the following information. If an item is not applicable please include a document indicating the item's inapplicability. The pages of the attachments do not need to be numbered.

Attachment 1 | Proposed Budget:

- **Line-item project budget**, including other sources of funding for the project in Excel or other compatible spreadsheet format

Attachment 2 | Proposed Timeline & Benchmarks:

- A **project timeline** for the entire period of the project that identifies tasks/benchmarks the grantee will accomplish
- For any project that requires an environmental permit, a copy of the completed permit application or the permit itself, if already received

Attachment 3 | Organizational Materials:

- Letter signed by executive director, board chair, or other appropriate official stating organizational support for the proposal
- List of Staff, Officers, and Board of Directors for your organization
- Copy of the applicant's conflict of interest policy
- Most recent annual independent audit (executive summary only, if available)

Attachment 4 | Letters of Support:

- A maximum of five letters of support and/or testimonials from project sponsors, participants, or supporters

Attachment 5 | Non-profit Organizational Materials (Non-profits only):

- Certificate of Incorporation and by-laws
- IRS letter showing tax-exempt status
- Organizational budget and income for the current year and, if available, for the next fiscal year and any period covered by the grant request

V. EVALUATION CRITERIA

Applications are evaluated according to the following criteria. The scores indicate the relative importance of each criterion category; however, successful applicants will have strong scores in each category.

1. RELEVANCE OF PROPOSAL TO THE EEG PROGRAM 35%
 - 1.1. Whether proposal incorporates the EEG objectives
 - 1.2. Whether the proposal meets a specific or identified need related to the EEG objectives
 - 1.3. Whether the proposal is duplicated by other programs currently funded through other means
 - 1.4. Significance or urgency of problem addressed
 - 1.5. Replicability of project in other parts of North Carolina
 - 1.6. Public benefit of project
2. EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION 20%
 - 2.1. Qualifications of applicant for the proposed project
 - 2.2. Demonstrated ability of the applicant to manage and complete the project
 - 2.3. Participation of multiple partner organizations in project
3. QUALITY OF PROJECT DESIGN 20%
 - 3.1. Appropriateness of the methodology or approach to the problem presented
 - 3.2. Thoroughness of project design and engineering
 - 3.3. Feasibility of proposed project, awareness of potential problems, and suggested solutions
 - 3.4. Sustainability of project after grant closed

4. MEASURABILITY OF PROJECT PROGRESS 15%
 - 4.1. Identification of project benchmarks or milestones
 - 4.2. Demonstrated ability to measure the results of the project
 - 4.3. Impacts and benefits expected from successful project
 - 4.4. Appropriateness of project budget
5. ADEQUACY OF PROPOSED BUDGET TO COMPLETE THE PROJECT 10%
 - 5.1. Availability of additional funds
 - 5.2. Total cost of the project relative to the perceived benefits from successful completion of the project
 - 5.3. Appropriateness of budget compared to the level of effort

VI. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DISCRETION

For each proposal submitted, the Attorney General has absolute discretion to:

- Accept or reject any proposal
- Accept a proposal on the condition that certain modifications be made
- Assess proposals as he sees fit, without in any way being obligated to select any proposal
- Determine whether any proposal or proposals satisfactorily meet the evaluation criteria set out in this RFP
- Reject all proposals with or without cause, whether based on the evaluation criteria set out above or otherwise

PERFORMANCE GUIDELINES

The EEG Program requires several accountability measures from grant recipients. These measures will include: quarterly reports; independent audits; and an adequate system of accounting and internal controls. The last payment under the grant will not be made until submission by grantee of a final report, which at a minimum must include a narrative evaluation and summary of the project, appropriate documentation of the completion of the project and how it met the goals of the project, and a full financial report on the project. Grant recipients are expected to make provision for public distribution of information regarding their activities and to provide promptly to the Attorney General any published news, journal, or newsletter articles regarding the project.

INTEREST AND INFORMATIONAL MEETINGS

The Attorney General's Office will hold an interest meeting on Thursday, July 25, 2019. The interest meeting is strictly voluntary and will introduce the EEG program and information about past grant awards and address any questions that might arise, including those with regard to the Letter of Intent. To register for the interest meeting, please send an e-mail with your name, organization and a contact phone number to **EEG@ncdoj.gov**. Those who register will be sent follow-up information on the meeting location and time.

The Attorney General's Office will hold an informational meeting on Wednesday, September 11, 2019. The informational meeting is strictly voluntary and will cover the RFP and the application process and address any questions that might arise. Only those who have submitted a Letter of Intent may attend the September 11th informational meeting. To register for the informational meeting, please send an e-mail with your name, organization and a contact phone number to **EEG@ncdoj.gov**. Those who register will be sent follow-up information on the meeting location and time.

PUBLIC RECORDS NOTICE

By submitting a proposal, each applicant represents and warrants to the Attorney General that the information in the proposal is accurate and complete. All proposals submitted to the Attorney General under this RFP and any written communications with Department of Justice staff, including e-mail, are public records subject to the North Carolina Public Records Act.
